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ABSTRACT

A study examined classroom discourse in three literature class discussions among 15 high school juniors and their teacher as they tried to make sense of "Hamlet" and "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead." Participants' moves (what the students and teacher were trying to do with their language during the discussion); participants' perspectives (how selected informants personally understood the topics and dynamics of the discussions); and the nature of the "wondering" discourse (the exploratory talk embedded in the discussions) all provide a rich base for drawing educational implications about ways to support classroom discussion. "Wondering" is first defined as largely an internal dialogue which defies prediction and precise measurement. Results document classroom interaction that contrasts with previous studies of classroom discourse in that both the students and the teacher in this class were initiating topics and asking questions of substance. Further, an examination of the participants' perspectives on the discussions reveals in detail that episodes from the discussions were different events for each participant who was interviewed. Contains 45 references and five tables of data.) (RS)

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Wondering Discourse in the Classroom

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WONDERING DISCOURSE IN THE CLASSROOM

This paper presents the results from a study of the classroom discourse in three literature class discussions among high school juniors and their teacher as they try to make sense of Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. Participants' moves, what the students and teacher were trying to do with their language during the discussions; participants' perspectives, how selected informants personally understood the topics and dynamics of the discussions; and the nature of the wondering discourse, the exploratory talk embedded in the discussions, all provide a rich base for drawing educational implications about ways to support classroom discussion. Results from this study document classroom interaction that is in striking contrast to previous studies of classroom discourse in that both the students and the teacher in this class are initiating topics and asking questions of substance. Further, an examination of the participants' perspectives on the discussions reveals in intriguing detail that episodes from the discussions were quite different events for each participant who was interviewed.

Wondering is playing with ideas. When we wonder, we invite uncertainty, we open our minds, and we take a fresh view. We seek new ways of understanding; we construct alternate concepts; we imagine possibilities. We try to break old patterns of thought-- we form new meanings. Our wonderings are questions we ask ourselves. Wonderings open mental spaces for connecting new understandings with previous knowledge. We wonder about what we're interested in, what we care about. Wondering is a meeting place between our emotions and our intellect. Wondering is the desire to entertain uncertainty, to open our minds, to consider multiple perspectives and possibilities.

Wondering is largely an internal dialogue; only occasionally do we express our wonderings out loud. And because it arises necessarily from individual minds and their uniquely personal experiences, wondering defies prediction and precise measurement. Indeed, I don't believe that wondering is a unitary phenomenon, a single thing. Wondering appears to be a mental stance we take when we feel confident and curious. Wondering also may begin a process of individual sense-making. Hence, wondering is possibly both a stance of openness and an act of inquiry. Topics, expressions, and purposes of wondering vary among individuals and their particular circumstances.

Few educators have focused on wondering in the classroom. However, cognitive psychologists, rhetoricians, and educators have written about the importance of a questioning and open mind in learning (cf. Barnes,1975; Bruner,1986; Covino,1988; Hare, 1979). And from antiquity to this century, philosophers have pondered the phenomenon of wondering (cf. Plato, cited in Christian,1981; Noica, 1987; Verhoeven,1967). Many theorists also see active, idiosyncratic response to literature, response which must

include wondering, as central to the meaning-making process (cf. Langer,1989; Probst,1988; Rosenblatt,1978). Yet a number of recent surveys (eg. Boyer,1983; Goodlad,1984; Sizer,1985) have described a prevailing passivity and boredom among students in our schools. Studies of classroom discourse have depicted teachers controlling classroom talk with a typical battery of questions that are prescribed and rote, while students were asking few, if any, questions at all (cf. Alvermann and Hayes,1989; Dillon,1982; Gall,1984). Genuine classroom discussion (the exchange of questions and perspectives among all participants) seems most likely to nurture expressions of wondering, yet it remains strikingly absent from most descriptions of classroom interaction. A small number of researchers have considered classroom discussion (cf. Barnes,1986; Bridges,1987; Dillon,1988), and only a few (cf. Eeds and Wells,1989; Marshall,1988) have investigated class discussions of literature.

Seeking to consider the role of wondering in learning, to find expressions of wondering in a classroom, to observe wondering at work in a social context, I chose to undertake a study of classroom discussion because the attributes of a genuine discussion -- a give and take of ideas among all participants, the presentation of multiple perspectives, and the opening of possibilities with no requirement for closure-- are the very attributes that should provide a comfortable home for wondering and its out loud expression. Further, because current theory (cf. Probst, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1979) suggests that the study of literature requires a concern for the individual reader's personal interpretation, a literature classroom seemed well suited to provide the kind of rich, open-ended ideas through which wondering could thrive and take shape.

While discussion seemed likely to support expressions of wondering, what was the likelihood of my finding such interaction in a classroom? Many studies of classroom discourse (cf. Alvermann et al., 1990;

Bellack, et al. 1966) have documented the persistent dearth of genuine discussion in our schools. These same studies have revealed few, if any, questions asked by students. And researchers have reported that the preponderance of teachers' questions have had ready-made, prescribed answers (Cazden, 1988). The challenge was to find a classroom where both the teacher and the students asked questions that were open to personal interpretation, where wonderings could be expressed without ridicule or disparagement, where the discussion format provided a welcome forum for differing views.

Method

After soliciting names of English teachers with reputations for excellence, I found a teacher who engaged in genuine discussion with her students and was willing (along with the school administration) to open her classroom to my research. The teacher, a 39-year-old woman, had been teaching for six years at a small, private school outside a medium-sized city in the Southwest. In my initiating phone call to the teacher, I made no mention of the purpose of my study and simply described the situation I was looking for: a classroom where genuine discussions occur, a place where students respond not only to the teacher's questions but also engage in talk with one another, asking questions and making comments. The teacher was warm and welcoming. She assured me that discussions were the staple of her classroom interactions, and she was confident that her students were active participants, talking to each other as well as to her.

The group I chose to study was an eleventh-grade literature class of 15 students, a group that was mixed sexually and racially, and hence, likely to provide diverse viewpoints. I attended several classes weekly over a four-month period to provide a broad base for my interpretations. I audiotaped and

videotaped three discussions (following a pilot study to test my procedures, and a number of dry runs to get everybody used to the video camera, which I simply left running in a corner of the room while I joined the circle of students).

Because many researchers have agreed that an understanding of particular classroom interactions demands an account of the perspectives of those involved (cf. Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Erickson, 1986; Goetz & Lecompte, 1984), I also audiotaped a series of interviews with four selected students and the teacher after each of the three videotaped discussions. Hoping to tap a range of student responses to the discussions, I selected the students by asking the teacher to make two lists, one of students who tended to be chatty in class, and another of students who tended to be more quiet. I then put the names of the "chatty" students in one envelope and the names of the "quiet" students in another envelope and picked two names from each envelope. My four student informants turned out to be two "chatty" boys and two "quiet" girls. I taped the discussions and the interviews in three successive weeks. Because of the students' schedules, I had to conduct the interviews the day following each discussion. I used segments of the video as prompts during the interviews to spark the informants' memories of the previous day's discussion.

Data included 75 pages of detailed, verbatim transcripts of the discussion and over 325 pages of interview transcripts. I also kept field notes that consisted of descriptions and personal reflections (notes that I tried to compose after every phone call, meeting, or observation).

The purpose of my study was to explore the nature of wondering in classroom discussions of literature. To guide my work, I formulated three research questions:

1) What are the participants' moves in three literature class discussions?
2) What are the participants' perspectives on the three discussions?

3) What is the nature of the participants' wonderings?

The first question allowed me to take an overview of the three discussions and analyze the participants' discourse moves (cf. Bellack, et al. 1966 for the term "move"), that is, what the participants were trying to do with the language they used to explore the issues under discussion . (For example, students tried to clarify and confirm ideas, and the teacher tried to encourage students to express their opinions and to elaborate.) The second question required me to consider the classroom interactions from the viewpoints of those who were involved and to be careful in my interpretations. The third question was purposely open-ended because I didn't know what I would find or what meaning I would make (cf. Berthoff 1981).

A Sample Transcript

I begin by examining a particularly intriguing excerpt from a discussion of Hamlet . Then, I will discuss the results of the study in its entirety.

In this excerpt, a female student asks a wondering question that influences the subsequent course of the discussion. The class had been discussing Hamlet's changing character, and at the beginning of the excerpt the teacher is trying to focus students' attention on the bedroom scene between Hamlet and his mother when he skewers the eavesdropping Polonius and berates his mother for her unfaithfulness. (The numbers identify specific participants' moves, listed following the excerpt, and "W" identifies a wondering. Students chose their own pseudonyms.)

1. Silca: Um, did the queen have a choice on who she was, when she remarried? Like, did he ask her, "Will you marry me?" and she said, "Yes," or was, was it kind of just planned? 12 & 18 & 15 W

2. Teacher: See, we don't really know that. Um, do you mean like the government, would they plan it, is that what you mean? 7 & 9

3. Silca: No, I mean like, did she have a say in her second marriage? 'Cause I mean Hamlet's like blaming his mom. 15 & 18

4. Teacher: Um um (yes).

5. Silca: It's kind of, he's kind of like copping out or something. He's like, instead of saying it to/ . . .

6. Fidel: Well, maybe it was the only way she could stay queen/ 16

7. Silca: Instead of saying it to, to his new father. 15

8. Teacher: Right. He goes after his mother. 7

9. Silca: Yeah.

10. Teacher: Yeah, I, I think, well, judging from just some clues, I think she must have had a say. I mean, the fact that Hamlet would be so angry about her remarrying at all suggests that she had a choice. 4 Um, I mean, and I can't imagine why she, you know, why she wouldn't have a choice unless it were something that were dictated by the government. But since/ 11

11. Silca: 'Cause I thought they were, I don't know, I didn't think that they were asked, that it was all arranged. Like maybe, um. 19 W

12. Teacher: Yeah. I don't, I don't think there are very many textual clues to suggest that. Although really we just get Hamlet's perspective on it, that's true. Fidel? 4

13. Fidel: Maybe she was marrying him 'cause that was the only way that she could stay queen. 16

14. Teacher: It seems like a good possibility.

15. Tree: That's not what he thinks, though.

16. Teacher: Hamlet? What do you think he thinks? 9 & 2 & 3

17. Tree: He thinks that, that she was probably part of it. I . . That's what I think.

18. Teacher: Do you think that's why he's so angry with her and why he's so, um, in a way cruel to her? 7 & 2

19. Tree: I mean, if, if your mother married, married your uncle two months after your father died, and you know that your father killed, your uncle killed your father/ . . .

20. Teacher: Right.

21. Tree: /you know that there was probably something going on even when your father was still alive. 15 & 17

22. Teacher: Good. It does seem that they're in cahoots. Um, and that does seem to be a lot of Hamlet's motivation, you know, to, when he says that he's gonna set a mirror up so that Gertrude can see her inmost self, he seems to suggest that he wants to, you know, that he's gonna reflect this to her, and whether he's reflecting what Gertrude herself is like or whether what, is what Hamlet perceives Gertrude, um, as being like. 7 & 4 W

23. Amanda: It seems that in that whole part where he, where he was talking to her about, um, setting a mirror up and all that, he seems to be, I don't know what it really is, um, really self-righteous or/ . . .

24. Teacher: Um um (yes).

25. Amanda: Or, I don't know. 19 W

26. Teacher: Yeah. He even says that, doesn't he? 7 & 8 & 9

27. Amanda: I don't know.

Participants' Moves Used in this Excerpt:

2. Teacher tries to encourage students to express opinions
3. Teacher tries to prompt students to elaborate
4. Teacher tries to help students focus on subject matter
7. Teacher tries to refocus a student's idea
8. Teacher tries to remind students of previously available knowledge
9. Teacher tries to check mutual understanding
11. Teacher tries to invite reflection

12. Student tries to initiate topic
15. Student tries to clarify an idea
16. Student tries to confirm an idea
17. Student tries to connect subject matter with personal experience
18. Student tries to gain new information/knowledge
19. Student tries to invite reflection

"W" indicates an expressed wondering.

(Moves occurring in the data base but not in this particular segment are: 1. Teacher tries to initiate a topic, 5. Teacher tries to joke, 6. Teacher tries to connect subject matter with students' experience, 10. Teacher tries to gain new information/knowledge, 13. Student tries to joke, and 14. Student tries to clarify procedure.)

Across the three discussions, I found a total of 19 overlapping categories of participants' moves. Thirteen of them occur in this short excerpt. In the first turn, Silca tried to initiate a new topic, tried to clarify an idea, and tried to gain new information/knowledge when she wondered about whether the queen had a choice when she remarried. In response, the teacher stated, "we don't know that," trying to refocus Silca's idea, and then trying to check her understanding of Silca's question. Silca rephrased her wondering in turn three, again trying to clarify an idea and gain new knowledge. In turn five, she tried to clarify her idea further by suggesting that Hamlet is "copping out or something" by being harsh to his mother instead of to the new king. Fidel then tried to confirm his idea that the queen remarried so she could remain queen, but his point was interrupted by the continued dialogue (four turns) between Silca and the teacher about the question of the queen's choice.

Silca elaborated on her question about the queen's motives with a related wondering, trying to invite reflection about whether marriages were arranged for women in earlier times. (Although the question about marriages in earlier times may have definite answers for particular places and cultures, the participants here were considering multiple possibilities.) The teacher responded with doubt because she didn't see many textual clues to support the idea that the marriage had been arranged, trying to help students focus on subject matter. She also pointed out that they only had Hamlet's perspective on the issue, trying then to invite reflection.

In turn 13 Fidel finally got the floor, trying to confirm his suggestion that the queen was seeking some kind of security, a possibility which the teacher affirmed. Tree, however, disagreed, and he turned the topic back to Hamlet, suggesting "that's not what he thinks." Several turns followed between the teacher and Tree about whether Hamlet thinks Gertrude is "in cahoots" with

wondering about the queen, trying also to refocus Tree's idea and check mutual understanding.

Finally, in turn 23, Miranda uttered a wondering about Hamlet's self-righteousness, a wondering that seemed to have incubated since the first class discussion when she had suggested that Hamlet was self-absorbed. Although Miranda changed the topic, she was trying to see Hamlet through Gertrude's eyes, inviting reflection. This perspective may well have been sparked in part by Silca's earlier wondering. In any case, it did relate topically to Silca's question.

Eleven of the fourteen expressed wonderings in the whole discussion concerned the women's point of view and must have been influenced by Silca's wondering. Indeed, the discussion seemed to spark a mild male/female division in the class with the boys taking Hamlet's side and the girls, Gertrude and Ophelia's. The topic of the queen's motives seemed especially to engage the young women in the class. The topic of gender seemed to galvanize the students personally.

During the subsequent interviews, the five informants expressed very different reactions to Silca's wondering about whether the queen had a choice in her marriage. Upon reflection, the teacher told me, "That was an interesting question. I didn't know how to answer that. I mean I didn't have an answer for that because really I wouldn't assume a woman would have much of a choice." She also found Silca's question memorable and told me she thought the issue was significant because it showed the "way our reading of a text is so unstable over time" for individuals and reading communities.

Preconceived attitudes about classmates influenced two of my informants' responses to comments in this excerpt. Angela held a preconceived low opinion of Silca and thought Silca's question was "stupid." "Of course he

asked her. What are you talking about, [Silca], you know?" Yet when the teacher raised essentially the same question, Angela became interested. Flenoy agreed with the teacher that Hamlet wouldn't be so upset without cause. But he also said Silca's wondering was a "pretty good question" and asked, "Why would she marry her, someone who, well, she doesn't know but just killed her husband, so immediately after the death?" Unlike Angela, Flenoy considered himself to be Silca's friend and tended to be attentive to her comments. Thus both Angela and Flenoy's different evaluations of Silca's question were influenced by their preconceived attitudes toward Silca herself.

The directions of the other two informants' personal thinking in response to the issue Silca raised were also sharply divergent, though not because of preconceived attitudes toward Silca. Reflecting distinctive personalities, these two students were provoked in rather different ways. During our interview, Anne indicated a keen and continuing interest in whether the queen was some kind of accomplice to her first husband's murder. Indeed, she became excited about the issue and vowed to consider it further as she continued with her reading. In contrast, Rex simply didn't pay any attention to Silca's question. However, he did hear, "something about women's lib or something like that" and began thinking about an incident in gym class the previous day when the girls, as he told me, "had made the guys go move the mats and everything, and the girls just sat there, and it just made me mad." Rex drifted away entirely from the discussion of Hamlet but did maintain an interest in the issue of gender differences.

In this excerpt, a number of participants were wondering. Silca got her question on the floor first, but Fidel was also wondering about the queen's motives and plight although he had some difficulty presenting his idea for group consideration. Angela didn't respond to Silca but became interested when the

teacher presented the issue. Anne and the teacher were both prompted by the issue of the queen's choice to begin wondering about gender issues, and Flenoy was enticed by the group activity and his friendship with Silca to join in also. Miranda shifted the question, following up on a wondering she had expressed in a previous class about Hamlet's character, but she too joined in wondering about the queen's point of view.

Discussion of Results

Participants' Moves

Analysis of the wondering discourse in two discussions about Hamlet and in one about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead produced a description of unusual classroom interaction. Although the teacher was the central figure in the classroom, her students made effective contributions to both the tenor and the substance of the discussions. Close scrutiny of the interactions among the teacher and her 15 students generated 19 overlapping categories of participants' moves. (See Table 1.) Overall, I attained 82.61% three-way agreement on identifying the 19 moves in an inter-rater reliability check with two doctoral candidates in English Education.

I generated the categories by marking any comment that seemed to me to be an attempt to exert an influence on the direction and substance of the discussion from the perspective of the individual partcipant who made the comment. In other words, I tried to interpret the utterance from the viewpoint of its speaker. In my interpretation of moves, I assumed intention on the speaker's part. What I coded were the participants' attempts to accomplish selected intentions as I could construe them from the class discussions and transcripts. I did not try to judge whether their attempts were successful in influencing the responses of other participants, and I did not try to judge in what way someone's intentions were interpreted by the other participants.

I did not categorize every utterance, eliminating those which seemed peripheral to the exploration of ideas in discussion (e.g., statements of conviction or simple assertions, asides, directions, agreements, affirmations, or simple explanations). Overall, I categorized approximately 57% of the utterances in the three discussions.

As I made decisions about the comments I had marked, trying to describe their functions in the discussion, I began to see patterns in the utterances and found labels for them, such as "student tries to initiate topic" and "teacher tries to check mutual understanding." At times, one move worked to accomplish more than one purpose. For example, a comment by the teacher might both "try to initiate a topic" and "try to help students focus on subject matter." I generated 19 overlapping categories to describe the uses of language by the participants in the three discussions. I identified eleven moves by the teacher and eight moves by the students. I also divided the teacher's eleven moves into two larger categories of guiding moves and responding moves to provide an overview of her activity.

This complex system of moves describing the interactions in the three discussions contrasted sharply with previous studies of classroom discourse that have reported a narrow range of language use for both teachers and students (cf. Alvermann and Hayes, 1989; Mehan, 1979). In this study, the teacher and her students used language for a markedly wider range of purposes. Students made numerous attempts to initiate topics, asked questions of textual interest, worked to clarify and confirm ideas, invited reflection on topical issues, and made connections between the subject matter and their personal experiences. The teacher not only initiated topics and responded to students' contributions, she also asked questions to which she did not know the answers, invited reflection on issues that were new to her, attempted frequently

Percentages of Selected Participants' Moves in Three Class Discussions

	%of teacher's moves	% of total moves
Teacher's Moves		
1. Teacher tries to initiate topic	8%	5%
2. Teacher tries to encourage students to express opinions	6%	4%
3. Teacher tries to prompt students to elaborate	9%	5%
4. Teacher tries to help students focus on subject matter	15%	9%
5. Teacher tries to joke	3%	1%
6. Teacher tries to connect subject matter with students' experience	4%	2%
7. Teacher tries to refocus a student's idea	15%	9%
8. Teacher tries to remind students of previously available knowledge	4%	2%
9. Teacher tries to check mutual understanding	27%	15%
10. Teacher tries to gain new information/knowledge	4%	2%
11. Teacher tries to invite reflection	5%	3%

	% of students' moves	% of total moves
Students' Moves		
12. Student tries to initiate topic	11%	5%
13. Student tries to joke	3%	1%
14. Student tries to clarify procedure	20%	9%
15. Student tries to clarify an idea	12%	5%
16. Student tries to confirm an idea	26%	11%
17. Student tries to connect subject matter with personal experience	8%	3%
18. Student tries to gain new information/knowledge	11%	5%
19. Student tries to invite reflection	9%	4%

(At .50 or above, percentages are rounded to next higher number in this and all other charts.)

Table 1

to assess mutual understanding, tried to connect the subject matter with the students' experience, and encouraged students to express their opinions and elaborate on their ideas.

Individual students' turn-taking was widely distributed among members of the class. Certain students took more active roles during particular discussions, while others were relatively consistent in their level of participation.

See Table 2 for the number of turns each student took in the three discussions (not counting speakers who were unidentifiable).

Number of Turns by Each Student in the Three Discussions

Name	Discussion: 1	2	3	Total
Aaron	0	0	1	1
Amanda	18	15	16	49
Angela	0	0	0	0
Anne	0	6	0	6
Ashley	32	2	12	46
Brad	4	5	7	16
Catherine	0	14	7	21
Fidel	19	7	13	39
Flenoy	33	25	58	116
Katia	9	17	15	41
J.P.	10	10	52	72
Rex	9	19	11	39
Sam	41	6	38	85
Silca	9	45	0	54
Tree	18	19	6	43

Table 2

The most frequently used moves by the teacher and her students are displayed in Table 3. (Moves are overlapping, and thus some are counted more than once.) One kind of complementarity is apparent. The teacher's move tries to check mutual understanding, along with the students' moves tries to confirm an idea and tries to clarify an idea, create a remarkable pattern. These two student moves accounted for 16% of the total number of moves, and this teacher move accounted for 15%. That the numbers are close suggests that the monitoring of understanding in this classroom was shared. Together, the three moves comprised 31% of all moves in the discussions. Thus, one third of the participants' selected moves concerned the shared assessment of understanding.

Most Frequently Used Moves by Teacher and Students

Teacher's Moves (N=190)	% T's moves/% all moves	Students' Moves (N=166)	% Ss' moves/% all
Tries to check mutual understanding:	27%/15%	Tries to confirm an idea:	26%/11%
Tries to help students focus on subject matter:	15%/9%	Tries to clarify procedure:	20%/9%
Tries to refocus a student idea:	15%/9%	Tries to clarify an idea:	12%/5%
Tries to prompt students to elaborate:	9%/5%	Tries to initiate topic:	11%/5%
Tries to initiate topic:	8%/5%	Tries to gain new information/knowledge:	11%/5%
Tries to encourage students to express opinions:	6%/4%	Tries to invite reflection:	9%/4%
Totals:	80%/47%		80%/39%

(Total % of moves included: 86%)

Table 3

The 19 categories of participants' moves should provide a sense of the complexity of interaction among this one teacher and her students. The teacher and students in this classroom were engaged in furthering their thinking and understanding in a mutually negotiated meaning-making process.

By dividing the categories into teacher's moves and students' moves, I do not want to suggest that somehow the teacher and the students were engaged in two very different activities during the discussions. In general, I believe that this teacher and her students were using all their moves to work together toward a common goal of understanding. Nevertheless, it is true that the teacher's job was somewhat different from that of her students in that she

was the leader, and her activity clearly set the stage for what the students understood as appropriate behavior for the classroom interaction.

The teacher operated as an exemplar during the discussions. Her use of the strategies available to her as a participant reveals a delicate balance between, on the one hand, guiding, directing, and focusing students' attention and, on the other, responding, encouraging, and supporting students' ideas. (See Table 4.) The percentages for these two dimensions are quite close at 46% and 54%, with the weight given to encouragement and support.

The 19 selected participants' moves do not encompass absolutely or comprehensively the personal dynamics in the three class discussions, nor do they provide a "recipe" for class discussion. Rather, this system of overlapping categories of participants' moves serves best to give a sense of the complexity of individual needs and motives in group discussions. What is important is to recognize the variety of strategies that are available to both teachers and students in such situations. Unlike previous studies of classroom discourse that have suggested students generally play little role in the direction and substance of discussion (cf. Alvermann et al.,1990; Johnson, 1979), this study shows the students both helping to propel the three discussions and opening issues for reflection. Although both the teacher and students in this study may be unusual, they clearly demonstrated active, sense-making capacities at work in their interactions with one another.

Balance Between Teacher's Guiding Moves and Responding Moves

Guiding/Directing Moves		Responding/Encouraging Moves	
Tries to initiate topic:	8%	Tries to encourage students to express opinions:	6%
Tries to help students focus on subject matter:	15%	Tries to prompt students to elaborate:	9%
Tries to refocus a student idea:	15%	Tries to connect subject matter w/ students' experience:	4%
Tries to remind students of previously available knowledge:	4%	Tries to check mutual understanding:	27%
Tries to gain new information/knowledge:	4%	Tries to invite reflection:	5%
		Tries to joke:	3%
TOTAL:	46%		54%

Table 4

Participants' Perspectives

The perspectives of five participants (four selected students and their teacher) in the three literature class discussions reveal varied purposes, interests, and influences which both constrained and supported participation in the discussions. The teacher wanted her students to think both systematically and intuitively about literature, to communicate with each other as well as with her, and to garner pieces of their cultural heritage. The students wanted to do well on their tests and papers, to make sense of what they were reading and talking about, and to enjoy themselves.

During the interviews following each discussion, these five people provided their perspectives. In their responses to viewing particular videotaped

episodes, the participants expressed notably different interpretations. The series of interviews revealed that each discussion was a different classroom event for each participant who was interviewed. Students' attention to the discussions was both constrained and supported by a variety of personal influences, such as their assigned tasks in all their classes, their preconceived attitudes toward fellow students, their preparation for the discussion, their understanding of the subject matter, and their personal responses to the text. The teacher had a planned agenda, but, as part of her conscious pedagogy, she was attentive and responsive to students' ideas and questions.

The Informants

Angela was a pretty, rosy-cheeked blond whose self-professed major accomplishment during the course of our interviews was making the tennis team. She was a boarder at the school and an industrious, highly motivated student who felt frustrated in her English class because she couldn't seem to get past a high "B" on her papers. During my observations, she never made a comment to the group at large. When I asked about talking in class, she told me that in public school, where she'd been the previous year, "you're not supposed to," and added that she'd always been shy. Angela was one who was irritated with the indeterminacy of literature, at least in school. She explained: "It's nice to have things, like, decisive because you have so much homework, that, you know, you don't have time to think about this, you have to do whatever else." She modified her view by saying that she wouldn't mind pondering possibilities on her own when she had plenty of time.

Flenoy, my second informant, was a tall lanky fellow with shaggy blond hair, often pulled back in a pony tail or held by a bandana around his forehead. He had a penchant for drama and was acting in the school's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. His familiarity with Shakespeare's

language gave him a good deal of confidence in his understanding of Hamlet. Nevertheless, he began having trouble in his school work and was in danger of failing. He loved a good argument, however, and when I asked him how he managed to pay attention during the second class discussion when he was trying to study for tests in two other classes, he said: "When everybody started talking, I started listening, you know, because you hear this group conversaton."

The third student, Anne, an attractive young woman with long wavy dark hair, was shy and soft-spoken. Usually, she didn't speak in class, preferring to listen to others and take notes. Although she was extremely diffident about expressing her ideas, she demonstrated a keen and curious mind in our talk during the interviews. And in the second discussion, she spoke up several times. The teacher remarked on the change in her behavior, suggesting it might have had to do with the conversation we had in the first interview. In any case, she seemed particularly interested in the question of the queen's motives and told me, "I was interested 'cause I was talking partly." Also, in her reading at home, she had already made notes about the topics that were being discussed. Her written comments about an issue seemed to give her confidence to express them orally. She lived away from campus, and I got the impression that she used a good deal of her at-home time for reflection.

The fourth student, Rex, was an athletic young man with short brown hair and a perpetual baseball cap. Although Rex was on the list of chatty students, he spoke very little in the first class discussion. He explained, "I don't understand what's going on, so I can't say anything." Although he wasn't much interested in the issues under discussion, he provided rich information about the sources of his distraction. He thought Hamlet was boring, and he explained why:

> 'Cause there's no action. I mean there's action, but it doesn't seem like [it] comes very often. Whenever the action parts come up that we talk about, I kind of get into it, but then, I kind of go in and out of the class, you know? . . . When an action part comes, then I'm listening, but. . . . Like when he, when he's talking to his mom, and he goes and shoves the knife in the curtain and kills Polonius and that."

He didn't like the play and added: "It's kinda like, uh, whoever, Shakespeare, got bored writing it and decided to kill everybody is what I thought." In our interview, he revealed a good deal of interest in manual manipulations, playing with his friend's hat, taking his pen apart, writing his name on the pages in his book and fanning the pages. He noticed the particular designs on a friend's shirt button. Although his memory for the discussion was fairly ephemeral, his memory for the details that caught his interest was sharp.

The teacher of these students, and my fifth informant, was a small and wiry, soft-spoken woman in her late thirties. At the time of the study she was working on her doctorate in English literature, writing a theoretical treatise on Faulkner (since completed). She'd been teaching for six years and thought her experience as a student helped in her teaching. She explained, "Because otherwise you forget how, what pressure you feel when you're writing a paper or when you're taking an exam or any-- you just forget what it's like. Pain is so easy to forget." She lived on campus and obviously enjoyed her conversations and meetings with students, often welcoming them into her home. She told me: "Much more important than anything else that goes on in class is how we interact." Her theoretical perspective on literature was also a strong influence on her teaching. She described herself as attracted to the "indeterminacy" of literature, and she expressed a special interest in the changing nature of reading communities. Being somewhat eclectic in her approach, she

subscribed to elements in both deconstructionist and reader response theories. But she felt a conflict expressed by other teachers between wanting discussions to "range freely" and feeling pressure to "cover" material (cf. Marshall 1988).

Her purpose in teaching literature was to get her students to "think about things and get them, teach them how to think, systematically sometimes, and to work on their perceptions as well, their intuitive abilities." The second class discussion (from which the sample transcript was taken) had presented a new perspective to her and provoked her to wonder, "Why couldn't we as twentieth-century women read this as a tragedy of Gertrude and Ophelia instead of Hamlet?"

Taken together, these five informants represented a wide range of participation styles. Angela did not talk at all during the three discussions; Flenoy spoke more often than anyone except the teacher. Anne was intellectually engaged in the course material; Rex was not. One dimension that affords an interesting view of these participants' contrasting perspectives is along a certainty/uncertainty continuum. Individuals' tolerance for uncertainty surely varies with personality and purpose. Angela was impatient with open-ended questions in the classroom; she preferred to ponder uncertainty when she had plenty of time and no pressure to complete other assignments. Anne enjoyed considering questions of uncertainty, relishing the search for deeper meanings. The teacher's perspective on this dimension was probably closest to Anne's: a conscious and enjoyable alignment with the indeterminacy of literature. Flenoy displayed a conflict between his enjoyment of the freedom that unresolvable questions allow individual interpreters and his desire to be right about the issues that mattered to him. Rex had little interest in intellectual puzzles and simply wanted to know what was going on.

From this brief overview of participant's perspectives, we can see the powerful influence of personal attitudes and interests on the sense-making efforts of both the teacher and her students during a class discussion. Issues raised in all three discussions came in and out of focus for students, depending on their particular circumstances and personalities. The relationships among these varied personalities helped determine which questions and ideas were spoken, and who was listening. Their confidence, their preparations, the tasks they had to perform (both in this class and in others), the amount of time they needed to think, the experiences they had outside of class (eg. performing in another play by Shakespeare), and the nature of their personal responses to the subject matter influenced their individual decisions to participate, to listen, to reflect. Attention and participation were continually matters of individual choice.

Participants' Wonderings

In attempting to identify the expressed wonderings, I paid particular attention to linguistic uncertainty markers (cf. Feldman & Wertsch 1976) as a possible indication of a speaker's stance toward knowing and learning. I identified as uncertainty markers words and phrases such as "maybe," "might," "I'm not sure," "I guess," "I don't know." I used the context of the utterance to decide if the word or phrase was an indication of uncertainty. I did not attempt to untangle the various functions of uncertainty markers, which may be used also to express politeness or to hedge against error. In identifying the expressed wonderings in the discussions, I searched for comments that indicated a willingness and desire to entertain uncertainty; I looked for a stance that seemed open to multiple possibilities and perspectives. To identify wonderings, I excluded the kind of uncertainty that seemed to demand an immediate, definitive answer (such as a student asking, "What are we talking about?"). I identified 39 expressed wonderings by both the teacher and the

students in the three discussions, and I examined each wondering for content, purpose, characteristics, and source (who expressed the wondering). I attained 80% three-way agreement with my two raters on identifying wonderings.

The participants' wonderings in all three discussions, their expressed desire and willingness to consider multiple possibilities on an issue and to hold their minds open, were largely speculations about literary characters and their plights. Eleven of the sixteen members of class (including the teacher) expressed at least one wondering out loud in the discussions. (See Table 5.) A considerable number of other wonderings remained

Who Expressed Wonderings in the Three Discussions

Discussion:	1	2	3	Total
Teacher	5	6	0	11
Silca	0	5	0	5
Amanda	1	1	0	2
Katia	0	1	0	1
Anne	0	0	0	0
Flenoy	2	1	1	4
Ashley	4	0	1	5
Angela	0	0	0	0
Rex	0	0	0	0
Aaron	0	0	0	0
Sam	2	0	0	2
Fidel	2	1	2	5
Brad	0	0	0	0
Catherine	0	0	1	1
J.P.	0	0	2	2
Tree	1	0	0	1

Table 5

unspoken in class (and were later reported to me in the interviews) and included musings about personal connections and experiences.

The topic of discussion and the text under study exerted an influence on both expressed and unspoken wonderings. How a topic was framed, the terms in which an issue was couched, seemed to shape the interaction (cf. Goffman, 1974). When a topic invited multiple perspectives, such as the complicated question of character and motivation that Silca raised about the queen, wondering seemed to flourish. But wondering decreased markedly when an issue was presented in a way that framed terms of response narrowly, such as questions that could be answered simply "either/or," allowing little room for speculation (eg., a heated argument about whether or not Rosencrantz had been cheating Guildenstern in a game of coin toss).

Also, students responded differently to the particular text under study. In Hamlet, in addition to a thematic structure that invites questioning, Shakespeare's language itself presented a challenge for many students and perhaps reinforced an uncertain frame of mind and a willingness to engage in questioning. On the other hand, Rex's understanding of the text was so shaky (despite assiduous study of the Cliff Notes) that he was unable to formulate any questions. He enjoyed participating in classroom interactions and felt badly that he couldn't contribute much to the discussion of Hamlet.

The teacher provided a model of wondering for her students. She was open to new ideas, listened carefully to her students' contributions, and was well-prepared and engaged intellectually in her field. She was knowledgeable about current literary theory and consistent in her use of exploratory language to talk about literary interpretations. The use of uncertainty markers by both the teacher and her students was substantial and must have made appropriate an uncertain, open-minded stance in talking about literary issues. The teacher responded with keen interest to her students' questions and ideas and frequently expressed her own wonderings.

The wonderings in these discussions were idiosyncratic in source; they seemed to spring from individual minds and circumstances. Though unpredictable, they were often expressed and shared. Some students exhibited a marked personal intensity in their attempts to follow up on their own wonderings, while other participants' responses to the expressed wonderings were quite variable. The timing and wording of expressed wonderings within the continuing stream of discourse, as well as preconceived attitudes toward the class members who contributed them, influenced the responses the wonderings received.

Implications for Educational Practice

The Value of Discussion

Covino (1988) has written that wondering necessarily sends us into conversation with other ideas and other people. We seek others' points of view; we seek others' special knowledge and experience. Both industry and government make use of round-table discussions or week-end retreats to solve problems by inviting everyone's ideas. A retired army colonel told me that military strategists solicit multiple points of view and alternative contingencies when planning battles. Group leaders try to take advantage of the group's best knowledge. And different people know different things. By pooling resources, individuals can consider multiple perspectives. In the classroom, genuine discussion is well-suited to encouraging this kind of exchange among students. Results from the current study suggest many ways that classroom discussion can foster students' intellectual development.

Unlike earlier studies that showed a relatively stable pattern of classroom interaction, a pattern that precludes students' initiative and questioning (cf. Bellack, et al.,1966; Johnson,1979; Marshall,1988), this study has demonstrated that students can contribute in important ways to the

substance of classroom discourse. The results of this study suggest strongly that teachers and students can use language for a wider range of purposes and interests than has previously been documented.

Results from this study also suggest that the experience of a classroom event is a uniquely personal one. A discussion that invites students' contributions may instill a sense of personal control over the topics of classroom discourse, and hence, over the learning process itself. Students probably will better remember discussions about their own questions than they will, the rote responses to teachers' prescribed questions (cf. Ross & Killey 1977). And the opportunity to talk about questions of personal interest must motivate students to participate actively. Classroom discussions that invite a free exchange of ideas surely support students' individual sense-making.

The dynamics of discussion, however, also make the experience a markedly social one. The negotiation of meaning among a range of personalities and perspectives, what Bruner (1986) called "joint culture creating," is a staple of good classroom discussions. Although we need to know more about how talking contributes to understanding (cf. Eeds & Wells 1989), we can see in the present study that students who expressed their wonderings about literary issues were considering multiple possibilities. They were withholding judgment, a frame of mind often necessary to literary appreciation (cf. Squire 1964).

Classroom discussion can provide a forum for the diversity of perspectives among the students in our schools. When they may freely exchange ideas, students can learn from each other. Dillon (1979) has remarked on students' propensity to elaborate more fully in response to their peers' comments or questions than to those of the teacher. If teachers could promote discussion in their classrooms, they would find students talking to each

other in exploratory ways, ways that both Barnes (1975) and Britton (1986) have insisted are important to their learning.

If knowledge is conceived as dynamic and changing, students must learn to participate in its shaping. Current theory in the field of literature strongly suggests that meaning is made in the negotiation among individual members of shifting communities of readers (cf. Probst 1988). Probst wrote that the multiple perspectives that emerge when discussing a literary work provide a crucial chance for students to envision alternative readings and to clarify their own points of view. Probst also suggested that students should be encouraged to develop a tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Participating in genuine discussion is one important way that teachers can model that kind of thinking.

Bruner (1986) asserted that the study of literature should be "trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties" (p.26). Discussions of literature provide a unique opportunity for the expression of differing points of view. In an open-minded discussion, students get an opportunity to try out different interpretations of literary situations without feeling personally threatened in any way. Students can be tentative; the emphemeral nature of talk allows anyone to change minds. In one of the class discussions analyzed for the present study, there was some talk about fear of the unknown. In an interview, I asked Flenoy if he could think of times when the unknown is not scary, and he answered, "In plays." We laughed, but I think he made an important point. Interpretation of literature invites uncertainty, and students can feel safe to explore the unknown.

The kind of creative and critical thinking that literary interpretation demands is nicely modeled during the dynamics of discussion. Several of my informants remarked on the value of the class discussions in their studies. They told me that listening to both their teacher and their peers helped prepare them

for the tests they had to take as well as for the papers they were assigned to write. Listening to another student's comment or question might raise a new idea or alleviate like-minded confusion. Also, the class discussions often seemed to plant seeds of thought for later, private cultivation.

Another value of discussion lies in the realm of assessment. Students' questions and wonderings are an important indication of what they know. And students learn ways of performing appropriately (and successfully) from the kind of talk required for discussion in any given academic area (or classroom). How students are expected to respond to discussions of literature tells them, in essence, how to think about literature. Bruner (1986) wrote, "How one talks comes eventually to be how one represents what one talks about" (p.131). How teachers talk about the subject matter they're trying to teach tells students how to think about that material-- how to grapple with it and make sense of it.

Students learn what is expected of them. They come to know the criteria their teacher has for their success. This awareness provides a crucial feedback effect-- it allows students to assess their own performance. If the teacher's criteria include authentic, personal response to literature, students will likely become engaged in monitoring their own understanding. This study showed that students frequently tried to confirm and clarify their ideas. They were engaged in active, self-initiated thinking. The opportunity to pursue questions of personal interest must be highly motivating, dispersing as it may the fog of inertia and boredom so common to our students (cf. Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984).

Of the many kinds of thinking that reading literature can stimulate (cf. Langer1989), specific-answer comprehension tests measure only one small band on the spectrum. Teachers could learn a great deal about their students'

understanding from participating in a free-ranging discussion with them. Listening to students' clarifying questions as well as to their wonderings-- encouraging students to express their perplexities-- may be important ways for teachers to acknowledge their students' individual learning styles and unique personal knowledge.

Supports for Wondering in the Classroom

The crucial question is, "How can we support wondering and discussion in our classrooms?" Results from this study suggest that teachers can exert the leadership required for such an undertaking through their preparation for class, their demeanor toward their students, the language they use in the classroom, and their knowledge of the subject matter.

Preparation

To enhance discussion in the classroom and provide the opportunity for students to express and explore their wonderings, initial setting of the physical scene is essential. Face to face contact is apparently quite important (cf. Wilen 1988). The students in this study were arranged at desks in a circle, with the teacher generally sitting on her desk to join them. Although the teacher formed part of the circle, she did maintain a dominant position (as she did in the discourse).

Further, the private school where these classes took place had a policy that limited class size to 15. I have no doubt that the small number of students was an important factor in the success of their discussions. Of course, in most of our public school classrooms, the population of students is simply too large for effective whole-group discussion. When a class is too large to accommodate whole-group discussion (usually only a few students talk in such a situation), small numbers of students may be grouped separately. By circulating through the room, the teacher has the opportunity to interact with

every group. Another major advantage of small-group discussion is that all students have a chance to express their ideas (cf. Moffett & Wagner 1983).

The text that a teacher chooses for study also must exert a strong influence on classroom discussion. It was apparent during this study that the teacher's personal enthusiasm for, as well as her own careful study of Hamlet was an important stimulus to her students' thinking. Further, she carefully prepared for class by rereading the text and planning a tentative agenda of issues she wished to raise.

In addition to the importance of the teacher's preparation for class discussion, the kind of preparations that the students themselves made influenced their participation. One of the informants, Anne, who described herself as usually quiet during discussion, told me that the written comments she'd jotted down in the margin of the text while she was reading had given her the confidence to make, uncharacteristically, several contributions in the second class discussion. The teacher suggested that the conversation that student and I had had during our first interview had given the student more confidence too. Also, whether students had completed their reading assignment for class obviously affected their participation in the discussions. Preparatory reading, writing, and talking probably would enhance students' activity in class discussion. For example, students could be asked to do various pre-discussion exercises, from writing about a personal question to talking about an issue with a partner.

Another important support of genuine discussion has to do with the nature of the topic. In contrast to previously documented classroom discourse, both the teacher and the students in this study tried to initiate topics. That this move is traditionally reserved for teachers may constrain students' participation in many classrooms. Feeling able to influence the subject of

discussion may provide important encouragement for students to be active in class discussions.

Also, results from this study revealed that the way the question at issue is framed in a discussion markedly influenced the discourse. Narrow questions with clearly prescribed right or wrong answers probably do not enhance the free exchange of ideas among participants in a classroom discussion. Complicated questions with no definitive answers are perhaps best in enlisting students to contribute tentative ideas. If students know that uncertain responses and possibilities are valued, they may be more likely to engage in the kind of exploratory thinking that the study of literature demands.

The teacher in this study expressed a conflict between the desire to range freely in exploration of students' responses and the need to cover prescribed subject matter during discussion (e.g., issues about theme, plot, and character). Marshall (1988) documented the same conflict among both teachers and students. Do students' perceptions of the need for coverage discourage them from expressing their wonderings? Because classroom discussion is so well-suited to supporting a free exchange of ideas, perhaps teachers could devise other ways of "covering" material (e.g., lectures or handouts). If students are to participate actively in discussion, they must believe that their questions and ideas are valued. They must believe there is time to wonder.

Demeanor

Ultimately, it is the teacher who models the kind of thinking and talking she thinks is most valuable. Flenoy emphasized the importance of a teacher's response to questions that can yield different interpretations. He explained the pressure that students feel in the following way

> It's a hidden pressure, you know, and, you know, some, some quotes that you can find, at least on the last paper I wrote for English, some of the quotes I used to prove one point could easily be proved the opposite. It just depends on how you interpret the material, and, you know, I'm just worried about some analytical teacher just chopping that down, you know.

Nevertheless, this student was quick to point out that the teacher in this study wasn't the kind of teacher he worried about. He told me, "She's real open to anything you have to say." The teacher's openness to new ideas and the careful consideration she gave to her students' concerns testify to that truth. That this student could trust his teacher's responses must have been a crucial support to his participation in the discussions.

While observing this teacher's interactions with her students, I was struck by her obvious enjoyment of the students as individuals. She often talked informally with them before and after class. She called each by name, knew something of their lives outside of class, and often engaged in a kind of jovial riposte with them about school interests, such as the latest school newspaper, sporting event, or theatre production, as well as other current events. She displayed a lively and sympathetic sense of humor, and her students responded to her with obvious pleasure and good humor. Although I didn't observe her private conferences with students, I know she made herself available whenever a student needed help.

In the class discussions, her demeanor was poised and open. She told me she reread the text before each class and planned questions and ideas she wanted to raise. In the classes I observed, she occasionally referred to jotted notes and often read passages from the text out loud. She frequently modelled the kind of questions that reflect genuine perplexity and wondering. Indeed, she expressed wonderings more frequently than did any other class member. She also occasionally joined in a student's expressed wondering,

most notably in the second class discussion when she allowed Silca's question to influence the subsequent course of the discussion. She continually displayed keen interest in her students' responses. And her most frequently used move in the three discussions was to check that her students and she understood one another.

Although interest and attention in her class were variable (affected by all kinds of personal influences, such as, students' mood, preparation, friends, other work), the students generally appeared quite comfortable. From the beginning of my observations, I was impressed by how freely her students expressed their uncertainty. I heard words from students like "maybe," I guess," and "I don't know." These students did not fear the kind of ridicule or scorn that so often discourages students from asking questions in school (cf. Dillon 1981). Other researchers (cf. Major, 1975; Peters & Blues, 1978) have suggested that a teacher's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty is an important support to students' efforts to interpret literature.

This teacher presented her students with a face that was open and inviting. She also continually prodded students to delve more deeply into their ideas, asking them for elaboration and textual justification. In these ways, this teacher encouraged her students' participation and at the same time challenged them to stretch their understanding.

Language

Feldman and Wertsch (1976) showed teachers using a hypothetical mode of speech in interviews with other adults but not in the classroom with their students. Teachers presented knowledge to their students as if the world were a definite, static kind of place. Yet when the teachers interacted with peers, they seemed far less certain. Bruner (1986) contended

that a teacher's language in the classroom actively demonstrates to her students her stance toward knowledge and knowledge making. Bruner wrote:

> To the extent that the materials of education are chosen for their amenableness to imaginative transformation and are presented in a light to invite negotiation and speculation, to that extent education becomes a part of what I earlier called "culture making." The pupil, in effect, becomes a party to the negotiatory process by which facts are created and interpreted. He becomes at once an agent of knowledge making as well as a recipient of knowledge transmission. (p.127)

The speech of the teacher in this study was filled with uncertainty markers. And for the teacher, this was a conscious, theoretical stance. She believed that different reading communities may interpret a piece of literature in different ways. In one of our interviews, she remarked that she could see the young females in the class as constituting a new reading community for Hamlet. By couching her responses to their new questions in hypothetical terms (using words like "maybe," "seems," "possibly"), she invited her students into a negotiatory, meaning-making process, and she entertained new perspectives in her own interpretations.

The teacher actively demonstrated to her students the process of wondering. For example, in the earlier episode, when the issue of the queen's motives arose, the teacher responded to one student's idea by suggesting that the queen and her new husband do seem to be "in cahoots" over the murder of the late king. Later in the same discussion, responding to several students' interest in the female perspective, the teacher wondered if perhaps, after all, the queen might be innocent. The teacher was changing her mind out loud in the discussion; she was considering possibilities and holding her mind open. She was actively wondering.

In contrast to the teacher's consistent use of uncertainty markers in her language, the students' expressions of uncertainty were erratic. Although they expressed uncertainty frequently in the first two discussions, in the third class discussion (a discussion of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead) students' use of uncertainty markers dropped markedly. That discussion included a strident argument on the part of a few participants about whether Rosencrantz had been cheating Guildenstern in a game of coin toss. It seemed to me that the expressions of vehement certainty by the instigators of the argument contributed to the narrow scope of interpretation that was considered. A man was cheating or he wasn't. No questions about the fellow's motivation or plight. The discussion was not a great success, largely because of the initial dogmatic language that established the frame for the discussion.

Knowledge

How a teacher presents the subject matter in her classroom comes inevitably from the nature of her subject knowledge. Shulman (1987) wrote about the influence that one teacher's knowledge of her course material had on her teaching style. When faced with the job of presenting material she knew little about, her usually warm and interactive manner with her students evaporated. Shulman was interested in the way a teacher's content knowledge and pedogogical strategies interact. Whether consciously or not, teachers' conceptions of knowledge-- whether they see knowledge as fixed and predetermined or as changing and negotiable-- will communicate itself to their students. How a teacher talks with her students will, in essence, become a product of how she views her subject matter.

At the time of this study, the teacher was a doctoral student in the field of literature. In addition to being well-versed in both the history of literature and current literary theory, she was quite familiar with the peculiar demands of

being a student of literature. She understood in an immediate and personal way what is required to interpret literature. I believe that this knowledge gave her an authority and confidence in the classroom that her students recognized and responded to.

Because this teacher had a conscious, theoretical affinity for the indeterminacy of literature and the changing interpretations made by different communities of readers, she conducted her classroom discussions with a keen interest in her students' individual responses. She frequently tried to connect the textual material to her students' personal experiences, encouraging them to express their opinions and relate apt personal anecdotes. In turn, students themselves frequently, and voluntarily, tried to make connections between textual issues and their own experience. The teacher told me that she thought such connections were often the only way the subject matter of literature could be in any way meaningful to her students.

In contrast to this teacher's knowledge of literary theory and her philosophy of pedagogy, Applebee (1989) found in a survey of literature programs with a local reputation for excellence that over 70 percent of the teachers reported "little" or "no" familiarity with current literary theory. The dominant teaching strategy was a lecture/recitation approach. In only two classes did Applebee find an open-forum discussion format. It seems quite clear that a teacher's knowledge of her subject matter will affect her teaching methods. The teachers in Applebee's study apparently remained guided by the historical domination of the New Critics that made the teacher's interpretation the only correct one. These teachers must have believed that a close, analytical reading of a text would yield one interpretation. The students' only job in those classrooms was to figure out what the teacher thought. Such constraint must surely hinder classroom discussion.

Applebee also found that, for the surveyed teachers, current literary theory-- a theory that recognizes the "importance of the reader as well as the text in the process of literary understanding" (p.2)-- had little relevance to their jobs. Unlike those teachers, the teacher in this study perceived her class of students as a community of readers and hence, included her students in a negotiatory, meaning-making process of interpretation. Even so, she did not neglect the text, frequently directing students' attention to specific passages. When they asked questions or made comments, she often asked for textual references. She urged them to support their ideas with careful reading. In response, students often supplied textual details to justify their points of view.

This teacher also recognized that literature can engender multiple possibilities and that different perspectives add to our cultural store of interpretations. She invited students to express their ideas and uncertainties. If classroom discussions of literature are to succeed, teachers must make time for wondering and model a negotiatory stance. Students must join in making meaning.

Implications for Future Research

In 1987 Shulman wrote, "Richly developed portrayals of expertise in teaching are rare." He added:

> We find few descriptions or analyses of teachers that give careful attention not only to the management of students in classrooms, but also to the management of ideas within classroom discourse. (p.1)

This study makes one exploratory contribution to an aspect of educational research that has been neglected in the past, but we need further studies of the details of classroom mental life. We need to know more about what supports students' wondering. We need to know more about classroom

discussion. We need to understand what enhances the open-minded exchange of ideas in classroom discourse. What can teachers do to encourage a wondering frame of mind? What kinds of texts and topics encourage students to seek multiple interpretations? What kind of language invites discussion? The importance of talking about ideas needs to be examined further. How does discussion help understanding?

How is wondering expressed and for what purposes in other areas of language use? Studies of wondering in reading, writing, and creative drama could shed important light. What part do an individual's wonderings play in the process of reading comprehension? In the process of written composition? In the uses and expressions of the imagination?

Other aspects of open-mindedness and uncertainty should be explored further. Are a tolerance for uncertainty and an open-minded stance toward new ideas facets of personality or acts of will or even manifestations of changing moods? How can open-mindedness be developed and encouraged?

Researchers need to consider cultural and socioeconomic differences in expressions of wondering. Although I would speculate that the mental phenomenon of wondering is universal, the words that signal a wondering probably vary culturally (cf. Heath 1983). Studies of wondering could fruitfully be undertaken with students from a wider range of backgrounds than those in the present study.

I would also speculate that students from all levels of academic ability can express their wonderings and participate actively in class discussions. Indeed, so-called low-level students might benefit appreciably from being encouraged to express both their perplexities and their points of view. In any case, future research about wondering should include all kinds of students.

Perhaps most importantly, we need studies that examine in careful detail what goes on in classrooms where students and teachers are asking questions of exploration and speculation. We need to know more about wondering and how to support students' engagement with their wonderings. We need descriptions of the classroom as a community of individual meaning makers.

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